

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES June 25, 2004

Praising Private Space Exploration

Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate and commend the designers, builders, sponsors, and pilot of SpaceShipOne on the occasion of its successful flight out of earth's atmosphere on June 21, 2004. What is most remarkable about SpaceShipOne, of course, is that it is the first privately-financed and privately built vehicle to leave the Earth's atmosphere.

SpaceShipOne was designed and built by Burt Rutan and piloted by test pilot Michael W. Melvill. It was launched successfully from Mojave California, reaching a height of 100 KM (62 miles) above the Earth's surface. Remarkably, SpaceShipOne is entirely privately-financed, chiefly by Microsoft co-founder Paul G. Allen.

According to the designers and financiers of SpaceShipOne, the mission of this project is to demonstrate the viability of commercial space flight and to open the door for private space tourism. The successful completion of SpaceShipOne's maiden voyage demonstrates that relatively modest amounts of private funding can significantly increase the boundaries of commercial space technology. It constitutes a major leap toward their goal and demonstrates that private capital and private enterprise can be applied to enormous success all on its own. Those associated with this project represent the best of our American traditions, embodied in our enterprising and pioneering spirit.

Their success should also be read as a cautionary tale for all of us in government. If only the United States had a taxation policy that limited government and thereby freed up more private capital, there is no telling how many more like Burt Rutan, Paul Allen, and Michael Melvill would be able to do great things to the benefit all of mankind. This not just in space exploration, but in medical research, alternative energy research, and any number of the problems that continue to perplex mankind. Private enterprise depends on results and success and therefore private capital is always targeted much more wisely than is monies confiscated by governments.

With this successful maiden voyage, SpaceShipOne is now the leading contender for the \$10 million Ansari X Prize, which is to be awarded to the first privately financed three-seat aircraft that reaches an altitude of 62 miles and repeats the feat within two weeks. I wish all those involved in this remarkable project the best of luck.